

A $\frac{1}{2}$.

S E R M O N

Occasioned by the

D E A T H

Of the REVEREND

Mr. Robert Wright,

Who departed this Life

APRIL the 22d, 1743.

Preached at *Haberdasher's-Hall*, May 1.

*And published at the People's Request with some
Enlargement.*

By THOMAS HALL.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. OSWALD, at the *Rose and Crown*
in the *Poultry*; R. KING, at the *Bible in Fore-*
Street; S. MASON, over-against *St. Alban's-*
Church, in *Wood-Street*; and M. FENNER,
at the *Turk's Head* in *Gracechurch-Street*. 1743.

414 (Price Six-Pence.)

S E R M O N

Occasioned by the

D E A T H

OF THE REV. FATHER

M. Robert Wright

Who departed this life

April the 22d, 1743.

Preached at Haberdashers-Hall, May 1.

And published at the R. Rogers and Son



By THOMAS HALL

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. Oatway, at the Rose and Crown
in the Strand; R. Kincaid, at the Bible in York-
Street; S. Mason, over-against St. Albans's
Church, in Wood-Street; and M. Parker,
at the York's Head in Green-Street. 1743.

(Price Six Pence.)

2 COR. IV. 7.

But we have this Treasure in Earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power may be of GOD, and not of us.

IN order to put a just Construction upon God's *Providential Dispensations*, it is necessary that we view them in the Light of his *holy Word*; by a careful Attention to which we may humbly hope to come at a right Understanding of many Events, which would otherwise be very mysterious and dark, and to have our *Spirits reconciled* to those which at present are very afflicting and grievous.

The *bodily Weaknesses* and *Mortality* of *godly Ministers*, whose Hearts and Minds were formed for an extensive Usefulness in the Church, are Occurrences of that threatening Nature, and so affecting to the *Saints*, that in an Hour of Temptation they are apt to be thereby *disheartened* in the Cause of *Christ*, and *dispirited* in his Service. But the Passage I have now read, being duly considered, may fully convince us, that even *these Dispensations*, like every other Step in the Divine Government and Rule, being concerted in Heaven, are determined for weighty Reasons; and whatever be the mistaken Apprehensions of any about them, yet they are kindly ordered to very valuable Purposes.

The Experience of *their own gradual Decays*, is to *faithful Ministers* themselves a pressing Argument to engage them, as it did the *Apostle Peter*, to be

the more diligent in stirring up the People, by putting them in Remembrance of the Things which relate to the Kingdom of Christ, and the Salvation of their Souls. And the Observation of the Frailty of Ministers, when it is sanctified to the People, is likewise a quickening Spur to them, that they may be the more careful to improve their present Opportunities, and to have spiritual and eternal Things always in Remembrance. Nay further, (and this is a Matter of the greatest Importance,) by the Weakness and Frailty of Ministers, all the Glory of the Success of the Gospel is entirely secured to the Excellency of the Power of GOD.

And if, thro' the Divine Blessing, the solemn Farewel, which upon the last Sacrament-Day but one was taken of this Church by your late Pastor;---if the affectionate and striking Manner in which he then addressed you, before he went from the Table of the Lord;---if that moving and warming Opportunity, which (it is thought) cannot easily be forgotten by any that felt its Power;---and if his final Departure and Dissolution, which (agreeable to his own heavenly Wish and submissive Desire,) by the Sovereign Disposal of the Lord is since come to pass;---I say, if this heavy Stroke, with its several aggravating Circumstances, should now be rightly improved, and the special Design be duly answered; if by all these you are now more than ever quickened, to magnify the Power, and adore the Grace of GOD, in that, notwithstanding all the Weakness of Ministers, the Gospel has been made to come with Life and Power to your Souls, you will then have a solid Ground of future and endless Joy. And in Case of this, your present Sorrow, how just or deep soever, can be but for a Season. The Issue of Things will then give you Reason thankfully to acknowledge, that you were Gainers, and not Losers, by this awful Dispensation.

Now

Now after such a gloomy Providence, to see the Glory of GOD in your Salvation clearly break forth and shine with the greater Lustre, is what you could not but esteem a most desirable Privilege, and is to be the Matter of your believing Prayers and of your raised Expectation: And a very delightful Encouragement to this may be justly taken from the Text; since while it speaks of our having this Treasure in Earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power may be of GOD, and not of Men, it gives a kind Intimation, that whatever be the Weakness of Ministers, yet thro' the Power of God the Word of his Grace shall be made remarkably useful to the Good of Souls.

There are Three Things that are set forth and intimated to us in the Words; viz.

(1.) The Excellency of a Gospel Ministry; which is here called a Treasure.

(2.) The Weakness of the Instruments employed in that Work; which are compared to Earthen Vessels. And,

(3.) The Reason why such weak Instruments are employed in so great a Work; that the Excellency of the Power may be of GOD, and not of Men.

(1.) Here is an Intimation of the Excellency of a Gospel Ministry. For that this Ministry is what the Text intends by the Treasure which we have in Earthen Vessels, is plain from what the Apostle had before been speaking of the Gospel Ministry in the preceding Chapter, where he expressly says, as to himself and his Fellow-Labourers, that God had made them able Ministers of the New Testament^b; and from the further Notice that he takes of it in the Beginning of this Chapter, where he acknowledges, that a Divine Support, in the faithful Discharge of this Work, was a singular

lar Mercy: *Therefore seeing we have this Ministry, as we have received Mercy we faint not.* From whence, I apprehend, there is sufficient Reason to conclude, that *the same Ministry* is still referred to in the *Text*; where, upon Account of its remarkable *Usefulness*, and wonderful *Aptitude* to be subservient to the *best Interest* of Men, it is called a *Treasure*. Which Term denotes *the Excellency* of a Gospel Ministry, and shews it to be one of the *highest External Privileges* that a People can enjoy. It gives likewise a tacit Intimation of the *Greatness* of the Work that is included in it; as will be shewn hereafter. Again,

(2.) The *Text* declares *the Weakness* of the *Instruments* employed in this Work: *This Treasure*, it is said, *we have in Earthen Vessels*: The Persons, to whom this Ministry is committed, are Men, and not Angels. The Comparison, no doubt, was intended to include them all; not *the Ordinary Ministers* of the Gospel only, but *the Extraordinary* too. Those excellent Persons, the *Apostles themselves*, were comprehended therein; and that as justly, as are any, even the *weakest* of those, who are called to *succeed* them in the *Work of the Ministry*.

This Description then is *universally applicable* to every one of *Christ's Ministers*: To those, that are the *most eminent* for their Piety, Spirituality, and Heavenly-Mindedness: To those also, who, with the *highest Measures* of Grace, are favoured with the *strongest* and *most healthful Constitution* of Body. They are all, in the Language of the *Text*, but *Earthen Vessels*; not one to be excepted.

By this *Metaphorical Expression* the *Weakness* of these *Instruments* is loudly proclaimed. They are of the same brittle, of the same frail, imperfect, and mortal
Make

Make with the rest of the Saints; with the rest of their Kindred, or Fellow-Creatures.

And how should it be otherwise? Since they are all chargeable with the same Original Guilt, and all tainted with the same Corruption and Sinfulness of Nature, which by Reason of the Fall descend from Adam through all Ages to all his Offspring. But then,

(3.) The Text assigns the Reason of God's employing such weak Instruments in so great a Service: Which is, that whenever the Gospel becomes useful to the Conversion and Salvation of any Souls, its Success may appear to be owing, not to any Power or Virtue in them that preach it, but to the Excellency of the Power of GOD, who alone can bless it.

The Words being thus explained, it will be very agreeable to their Design to raise this Observation from them; viz.

GOD's carrying on the Work of the Gospel with Success by such weak Instruments, as at best his Ministers are, greatly redounds to his own Glory.

The Truth of this is so evident, that it cannot in the least be questioned by any, whose Minds are rightly disposed to regard GOD's mighty Acts, and the glorious Majesty of his Kingdom. And it is a Truth in which the Honour of his Name is so nearly concerned, that it will ever be humbly confessed by all his People, and constantly maintained by all his faithful Ministers, who, after the Example of the Apostles, are careful to preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.

And since, through the Desire of this Church, it is become my Duty to offer a few Things for your Benefit,

Benefit, Support, and Direction, under a fresh and very affecting *Instance* of the *Frailty* and *Mortality* of *Ministers* in the *Death* of the Reverend *Mr. Robert Wright*, I thought it not improper to discourse upon *this Subject* on this sorrowful Occasion. For the *Truths*, which it naturally leads me to deliver, have a direct *Tendency* to excite your *believing Admiration* of the *Power* and *Grace* of *GOD*, and thus to engage your *fixed Dependance* upon *Him* for the full *Accomplishment* of your *Salvation*, under this, and every other threatening Dispensation.

With this View I shall proceed to enlarge upon the Point proposed: And, thro' Divine Assistance, I shall

I. Consider the *Ministerial Work* itself.

II. Take Notice of the *Weakness* of the *Persons* employed in it.

III. Shew from a *comparative View* of these Things, that the *Success* of the *Gospel* must needs redound to the *Glory* of *GOD*. And then,

IV. Conclude with some suitable *Application*.

I. I shall consider the *Ministerial Work* itself, that somewhat of its *Difficulty* may be perceived.

The Account which I now design to give of *this Work* shall be drawn chiefly from the *Term* used in the *Text*, where the *Apostle* calls the *Ministry* of the *Gospel* A TREASURE. This suggests *Two Things*, from which we may learn what some of the chief *Branches* of a *Minister's Work* must be. It is here suggested,

[1.] That there is a *Treasure* lodged with *Christ's faithful Ministers*. And,

[2.] That

[2.] That *this Treasure* is deposited with them for the *Service and Benefit of others.*

[1.] There is a *Treasure* lodged with *Christ's Ministers*; even a *Treasure of Gospel-Light and Gospel-Grace.*

This *Treasure* the *Apostles* had, and they received it from *God*; as it is declared in the *Verse* which immediately precedes the Text: For *GOD*, who commanded the *Light* to shine out of *Darkness*, hath shined in *OUR HEARTS*. Here it is observable, that *God* gave them, not barely a *doctrinal Knowledge* of the *Things of the Gospel*, but the *inward Feeling* of those *Spiritual Things*, and an *experimental Acquaintance* therewith, to fit them for the *Ministry*: Without which *Experience*, neither the greatest *Natural Abilities*, nor the richest *Acquirements in Human Learning*, can ever be *sufficient Qualifications* for so holy and spiritual a *Work* as the *Ministry* is. It is sad therefore, when *Persons*, evidently *destitute of the Grace of GOD*, either *obtrude themselves*, or are *by others admitted* into this sacred *Function*. The *Issue* of such a wrong *Proceeding* must be dreadful; for *when the Blind lead the Blind*, what can be expected, but that as *our Lord* has taught us, *both must fall* to their endless *Destruction and Ruin*.

To prevent this, a *Treasure of Knowledge and Experience*, a *Treasure of Light and Grace*, a *Treasure of the same Nature and Kind* as the *Apostles* had, tho' not in the *same Degree or Measure*, is given to every one of those whom *Christ* calls to the *Ministerial Work and Office*. They are all *intrusted with a Treasure*.

[2.] This *Treasure* is deposited with them for the *Advantage and Benefit of others.*

It is *given them*, not merely that they may be made *rich in spiritual Things themselves*, but that with regard to *those heavenly Things* they may be *greatly helpful* to the *enriching of others* also. Thus the *Apostle* spoke of *himself* and his *Fellow-Labourers*, as *poor*, yet *making making many rich*^s.

One *special Design* then of *God's* ordaining his *Ministers* to be the *Repository* of such a *sacred Treasure*, is, that as *they have received*, so they may become the *Means* of giving to others the *Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of GOD*, as it *shines forth* in the *Person and Mediation of Jesus Christ*^h. Their *Light* and *Knowledge*, their *Gifts* and *Graces*, their most shining *Qualifications* and richest *Endowments*, are all bestowed upon them *for the Use and Behoof of the People*, among whom the *Providence of God* does call them to labour.

From *these Hints* we may perceive, what must be *some of the most considerable Branches* of the *Ministerial Work*. As *Ministers* have so great a *Trust* committed to them, *they* are strictly bound to pursue and discharge *this Trust*, according to the *Dispensation of GOD* which is *given unto them*, for the *Advantage of the People*: And this is to be done, as the *Apostle* shews, by *fulfilling the Word of GOD*ⁱ, or preaching it fully. *Necessity* is laid upon them; yea, *Woe* is unto them, if they *preach not the Gospel*^k. They are then *with all Diligence and Care* to *dispense the Truths* of the everlasting and glorious *Gospel of the blessed GOD*; by an open and faithful *Proclamation* whereof they are to exhibit *the unsearchable Riches of Christ*, as the *Word* reveals them. This is to be done *with an Aim*, that thro' the *Blessing of the Lord* upon their *Labours*, *Sinners*, convinced of their lost and undone *Estate by Nature*, may be *prevailed upon*

upon to believe in Christ, to receive him as the Gift of the Father's Grace, and in the repeated Actings of Faith to make use of all the Heavenly Treasures that are in Him for their compleat Salvation to GOD's eternal Praise and Glory.

This is a general Account of the Ministerial Work, which may be more fully opened under the several Heads included in it; such as these that follow.

- 1. Ministers are to endeavour to convince Sinners of their Need of Christ, and of his Heavenly Treasures.*

Here it is necessary to observe, what a real Distinction and manifest Difference there is between Christ and the Gospel, tho' the Word speaks of both as a Treasure.

Let the Gospel be compared with any other Means used by Men for obtaining the Knowledge of Divine Things; and then, what an invaluable Treasure does the Gospel itself appear to be. What relieving, what reviving and comfortable Truths does this reveal, which can never be learnt by any other Means within the Reach of Man? What glorious Tidings of Salvation does the Gospel publish, of which it must be the Infelicity and Misery of all to be ignorant, that never hear its joyful Sound? It proclaims the most wonderful and surprizing Instances of the Love of GOD in Christ: Things, into which the most piercing Eye of the Heathen Philosophers could never penetrate: Yea, Things which it could never once have entered into the Heart of Man to conceive, if the Gospel had not first revealed them. The greatest Improvement, whether of the ancient, or modern Philosophy, cannot possibly rise any higher, than to give us some Knowledge of the infinite Perfection and Glory of GOD, with regard to such invisible Things as are his eternal Power and Godhead: But it

can never instruct Sinners, how their Transgressions may be forgiven, how their Iniquities may be purged away, or how a guilty self-condemned Sinner may hope to stand before an infinitely righteous and holy GOD with Acceptance, Peace, and Comfort. Oh no! It is by *the Gospel* only we are informed, that GOD was in Christ reconciling the World* unto Himself, not imputing their Trespases unto them¹. Not the least Hint of the unsearchable Riches of Christ can any where else be met with. It is from thence alone we learn, either that there is a Saviour, whose Blood redeems from every Curse, or an Holy Ghost, who can effectually renew, sanctify, and cleanse from all Sin.

Such great and glorious Truths as these being revealed only in *the Gospel*, it may well be called a *Treasure*; for such indeed it is, and will ever be accounted by all, that are sincerely thirsting after saving Knowledge.

But if *the Gospel* be considered in another View, with a strict Regard to our great Redeemer, of whose infinite Glory it is but the external Revelation, then it is not *the Gospel*, but Christ Himself, that is
the

* Tho' they be a peculiar People for whom Christ gave himself, that he might redeem them from all Iniquity; (Tit. ii. 14.) yet without the least Contradiction to the many Texts, which fully teach the Doctrine of particular Redemption, we here see, that they may be fitly called THE WORLD: The Use of which Term may confirm us in the Belief of Three Things.— 1. That they are fallen Men, the Inhabitants of this World, and not fallen Angels, that are the Objects of redeeming Love. (Prov. viii. 31.)— 2. That these Persons are redeemed out of every Kindred, and Tongue, and People, and Nation; (Rev. v. 9.) and not from among the Jews only, as they ignorantly and fondly imagined: Which I apprehend to be the special Occasion of the Use of the Word here. And,— 3. That the Chosen and Redeemed of the Lord will at last appear to be so large a Number, yea, such an innumerable Multitude, that they will make a World indeed: And a most glorious and blessed World it will be! Rev. vii. 9.

the Treasure. The Gospel is but the *Field* in which *the Treasure* lies, the *Breast thro'* which *the Milk* is drawn, the *Honey-Comb* in which is found *the Honey*, or the *Dew* in which *the Manna* falls: Whereas it is *Christ*, that is really and properly *the Soul's enriching Treasure*. However *the Text* therefore may be supposed to *intend the Gospel itself*, yet since *Christ* is *the Treasure* of that Gospel, I shall take the Liberty to insist upon *his Riches*, as what it is *the main Business* of his *Ministers* to publish and proclaim: For He is *All in All*. In Him are bid all the *Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*:^m And it pleased the Father, that in him should all *Fulness dwell*; ⁿ all the *Fulness of Righteousness, Grace, and Peace*, with all the *Riches of eternal Life*. After the fullest Enjoyment then of the *Gospel-Revelation*, and of all the *Means of Grace* that attend it, without a *special Interest in Him*, the Souls of Men must be undone and lost for ever.

It is the *Duty of Ministers* therefore, in the *first Place*, to aim at the *Conviction of Sinners*, and to endeavour to shew them the *extream Poverty* of their Souls, how miserably indigent *their natural Condition* is: That the *whole World* cannot supply them with *all they need*, nor with what is *chiefly wanted*: That there is not any thing in *all the Creation*, that can render the *guilty Sinner happy*, or so much as make the *wounded Conscience easy*: And therefore, that *without an Interest in Christ*, and the incomparable *Treasures of his Righteousness and Grace*, nothing less than *eternal Ruin* is to be expected.

2. *Ministers* are to display the *Excellency, the Suitableness, and Abundance* of *Christ's Treasures*.

They

They are to *shew* the People, that *Riches and Honour* are with Him; yea, *durable Riches and Righteousness*. His *Treasures* are worthy of the highest Recommendation and Praise; truly *valuable* in themselves, and highly to be *valued* by all that love or fear GOD, and would gladly have Him for their *everlasting Portion*.

How *precious* and *excellent* are his *Treasures of Wisdom*, since thro' the *Knowledge and Understanding* which he gives, his *Disciples* are made *wise* for their *Souls*, and *wise unto Salvation*? And as to the *Riches of his Righteousness*, they are of that peculiar Nature and *infinite Worth*, that they give a *full Satisfaction* for all his *People's Debts*, even for those *vast Debts* which have been contracted thro' *innumerable Trespasses* committed against the great God; the least Part whereof could *never* have been *discharged* by the *utmost Payment* that the *whole Creation* could have made. Yea, *these Riches* have procured also the strictest *Alliance*, and the most powerful *Assistance of Heaven*, in Favour of all *true Believers*; so that not one of these shall ever *perish*, no, not thro' the deepest *Malice*, or the most violent *Rage of Hell*. How *excellent* then must *these Treasures* be? exceeding, *infinitely exceeding*, the richest and most peculiar *Treasures of Kings and Princes*.

And farther, what a remarkable *Suitableness* is there in them to the *Sinner's Case*? Can any thing be more *suitable* to those that are *highly guilty*, and *justly condemned*, than a *redeeming Righteousness*, and the *fullest Pardon*? Or any thing more *suitable* to the *starving Soul*, than the true *spiritual Manna*, the *living Bread* that came down from *Heaven*? Or to the *Soul perishing with Thirst*, in a *Pit* wherein no *comfort* is to be had, can any thing be more *refreshing* than the *living Water* which our *Saviour* gives? How wonderfully are the *precious Remedies* which this *Physician* has

has treasured up, *suit*ed to the languishing Condition of *Sin-sick Souls*? He has something *proper* for every *Case*; a *Salve* for every *Sore*; yea, an *effectual Cure* for every *Disease*, even for *that*, which in the *Sinner's own Apprehension* may seem to be of all others *the most desperate and incurable*.

And as the *Blessings* that are *laid up in Christ* are so incomparably *excellent and suitable*, so there is also a *vast Multitude* and a *great Variety* of them. How *large and plentiful* is the *Store*! And what a *rich Abundance*! There is *enough and enough*: *Enough* to *supply all our Need* of every *Sort*; and *enough* for every *one* that comes. There is *every Thing* that *fallen Man* can *need*; *every Thing* that the *renewed and holy Soul* would *desire*: *Enough* of all *good Things* for all the *Sons of Adam*, that *ever did*, that *ever shall*, or *will come to Christ* for his *Salvation*: *Enough* for all the *Israel of GOD*, tho' *Believers* should *multiply* till their *Number* becomes like *that of the Sand upon the Sea-Shore*. Oh the *inexhaustible Fulness*, which there is in *Christ*! His *Riches* are not like a *Treasure in a Chest*, but like a *Treasure in a Mine*; yea, and *infinitely more*; for in *Him* there is an *Ocean of Goodness*, which has neither *Bank nor Bottom*. And tho' it be *perpetually lived upon* by the *whole Family of God's Adoption*, both in *Heaven* and on *Earth*, yet it *cannot be spent*; it *cannot be lessened or diminished* in the least.

And it must certainly add an *exceeding Weight* of *Glory* to all these *Treasures*, that they are *Eternal*. They not only *suit* the *present Exigencies* of the *Soul*, but will *last as long as that shall last*, and run *parallel with its immortal Nature and endless Duration*. *Happy* are the *Persons*, that have *Christ and his Treasures* for their *Possession*! They have the *All-Sufficient*, the *Almighty GOD* to be *their Portion*, and that *for ever, and for ever*. The faithful *Publication* of such *glori-*

ous Tidings as these, is one great Part of the Duty and Work of Gospel-Ministers.

3. They are to shew, how Persons may become Partakers of these invaluable Treasures.

There is an inconceivable and infinite Fulness of all Grace laid up in Christ. Immense Treasures are hid in Him. But happy for us, they are not laid up, that they might be laid out of Sight; nor are they hid in Christ, that they should be hid from his People. No, but they are laid up and hid in Him, that they may be safely preserved, and in the most effectual Manner secured, for all the Redeemed and Chosen of the Lord, till the appointed Time shall come for their being actually conferred, according to the Order settled in the Covenant, and the Method declared in the Word of God: Which Time commences from the Day of the Soul's Espousal to Christ.

It is observable indeed with Respect to this, tho' in the Natural and Civil Life, the Case be widely different, that in the Spiritual Life it is the Day of the New-Birth which is constantly the very Day of the Soul's Espousal to Christ. For at the happy Season, (be the precise Time known to us, or not known,) wherein the Spirit of God comes as a Spirit of Regeneration, and quickens the Soul, He enables a Man to believe in Christ, and engages him to give his Consent to be the Lord's, saying in his very Heart, *I will be for Thee, and not for another.* The Soul, being thus enlivened, is brought into a Vital Union with Christ, and enters immediately into a Conjugal Relation to Him. Now to this Relation and Union, according to the Constitution and Settlement of the everlasting Covenant, does a delightful Communion with Christ in all His Treasures rightfully appertain.

And as in Cases of a Civil Nature, the Marriage-Relation interests the Wife in the Estate, Honours,

and Treasures of her *Husband*; thus thro' a *Vital and Conjugal Union with Christ*, the *Believer* is actually interested in all his Treasures, and in all his Glory. So that when a Person has sincerely and heartily closed with *Christ* by Faith, he may then justly say, *I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine*^r. And if *Christ* be ours, all is ours; for with Himself He freely gives us all his Treasure.

But let me caution here against Two Things.

(1.) Do not imagine, that you can share in the Riches of *Christ*, unless you first accept his Person.

Such indeed is the *Amiability*, such the transcendent Beauty and Excellency of our *Immanuel*, the Incarnate GOD, that his Person is infinitely to be preferred before any of the Blessings he has to bestow: And they that love Him not for what He is in Himself, cannot be supposed to have any Sincerity in their Love at all. If Men seek his Riches only, without an hearty Desire after the Enjoyment of his special Presence, and an Interest in his peculiar Affection and distinguishing Love, they have Reason to conclude, that they have never yet seen the King in his Beauty^s, nor tasted that the Lord is gracious^t. And should they die in their present Condition, they must perish in their beloved State of Poverty and Alienation from Him. This the *Apostle* teaches, saying, *He that bath the Son, bath Life; and he that bath not the Son of GOD, bath not Life*^u.

(2.) Let not any dream, that *Christ* is theirs, till in the most serious Manner they have given their hearty Consent to be the Lord's.

Whatever be the sacred Privileges which any enjoy, or the Multitude of religious Duties which they

C

perform;

^r Cant. vi. 3.

^s Isai. xxxii. 17.

^t 1 Pet. ii. 3.

^u 1 John v. 12.

perform; whatever be the *high Profession* they make, or the *distinguishing Zeal* they shew in the *Cause of Christ*; yet a comfortable Evidence of a *special Relation to him*, can never be justly drawn from any Thing of this Kind, unless *with the Heart* they have consented to be *entirely his*: i. e. unless they have consented to be *saved by his Blood*, to be *justified* for the Sake of his *Righteousness*, and of *that alone*; and are *willing* to be *sanctified*, to be *taught* and *led* by his *Spirit*, to be *disposed of* by his *Providence*, and constantly ruled and governed by his *Word*; aiming to *live to his Glory*, and to *grow up* into a *Conformity to Him*, and a *perfect Meetness* to dwell with Him for ever.

Till a Man has *through Grace* been enabled, in the Actings of *Faith* and *Love*, with an humble *Reverence*, an holy *Confidence*, and chearful *Subjection* of Soul, *thus to surrender*, dedicate, and devote *himself to the Lord*, he can have *no Evidence* of an *Interest* in Him, or any of the saving *Riches of his Grace*. And it is the *Duty of Ministers*, to endeavour to *set these Things* in the *clearest Light*, faithfully declaring from *the Word of God*, that if *any Man have not the Spirit of Christ*, he is none of *His*. Further,

4. *Ministers* are to encourage *Believers* to be continually making *Use of Christ*, and his *Heavenly Treasures*, to their compleat *Salvation*.

This unspeakable Privilege is *GOD's Allowance* to all the *Saints*. As they have received *Christ Jesus the Lord*, so they have *Leave*, nay, are even commanded, to *walk in Him*^x, to be ever *looking to Him* as the *Author and Finisher of their Faith*^y, and to be continually *trusting* in that infinite *Treasure of Merit*, which there is in his *Obedience, Sacrifice, and Intercession*.

sion, for the *Acceptance* of their *Persons* and all their *holy Duties*, and for their *Purification* from the many unavoidable *Defilements* and lamented *Imperfections*, of which they are *conscious*, or may be *daily guilty*.

They are *allowed* to *make use* of his *Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*;—that they may have a more full *Conviction* of the *Evil of Sin*, of their own *Vileness* and *Hell-deservings*, of the *Vanity* and *Emptiness* of the *Creature*, of the *Beauty of Holiness* with the transcendent *Excellency of spiritual Blessings*, and of the *infinite Perfection* and *Glory of a Covenant-GOD*;—that they may also have *Direction* in *Matters of Faith, Worship, and Obedience*, and in the prudent and religious *Management of the Affairs of Life*;—and that they may be helped to *improve every Discovery of Divine Truth*, every *Command and Promise of GOD*, with every *Event of his Providence*, to their *farther Establishment* in the *Ways of Religion*, their *Growth in Grace*, and their *nearer Conformity* to the *Heavenly Image of their Saviour and their GOD*.

They are *allowed*, moreover, *humbly to confide* in the *Fulness of Grace and Strength*, which is *treasured up* in this *Captain of their Salvation*; that they may be enabled to *subdue the Lusts* of their own *Hearts*, to *conquer the wicked One*, and *withstand all the Allurements* of this *present evil World*; and that at length, in his own *Time*, they may have a *complete Redemption* from *all their Enemies*, from *all the Opposition* which they meet with at present, and *all the Imperfection* which here attends their *Obedience to GOD*, and their *Enjoyment of Him*.

Thus *Believers* are *allowed to use the Treasures of Christ* to their *complete Salvation*; and *Ministers* are to give them the *fullest Assurance* of it, from the *Word of the Truth of the Gospel*, which they are *bound to preach*. And then,

5. It is the *Duty of Ministers* to shew, how *Christ's Treasures* are to be used and improved by all the *Saints to GOD's Glory*.

Ministers are therefore faithfully to declare, that *Christ* is to be received as the *Gift of the Father's Grace*, to be trusted in as a *Ransom of his providing*, and beheld, like the *brazen Serpent* of old, as the great and only *Ordinance of GOD's Appointment* for the *Healing of his People*.

And what a wonderful *Display* is there of the *Glory of GOD*, in the surprizing *Provision* that is made in *Christ* for our eternal *Happiness*? — When we consider the *exact Suitableness* and *infinite Abundance* of this *Provision*, must not the *Greatness of the Love*, and the *Richness of the Mercy* of *God*, be acknowledged? If the *Condition* of the *apostate guilty Creature* be remembered, what a *Lustre* does this put upon the *Freeness of that Love*, which unasked and undesired, provided such a *glorious Relief* for *Creatures* altogether *unworthy* of the least *Mercy*; yea, for *Sinners*, of whose heinous *Crimes* and *Provocations* the *eternal Vengeance of Heaven* had been but a just and righteous *Retribution*? — And was this *Relief* ordained by *God* from *everlasting*, from the *Beginning*, or ever the *Earth* was²; what a full *Proof* is this, that as *GOD's Love to us* must be *prior* and *antecedent* to our *Love to him*, so likewise that its *Date* must be *Eternal*? — And is not the *Sovereignty of his Grace* to be adored, since it lay in his own *Breast* entirely, whether there should be any *Treasures* at all provided for *sinful, wretched, and miserable Men*, any more than for the *fallen Angels*? Or this being resolved upon and determined, it still lay in the *Pleasure of the LORD*, who of *Adam's Race* should be made the happy *Heirs* of these *inestimable Treasures*,
— And

—And who that believe, can cease to admire the *infinite Wisdom and Care of GOD*, which appear in his *lodging* such rich and important *Treasures* in *so able and safe a Hand*, as *Christ's* is; thro' whose Faithfulness and Power the *actual Bestowment or Application* of these *Treasures* is *secured* to those for whom they were designed, against the strongest *Opposition* and most cunning *Deceit*, beyond all *Uncertainty*, or the least *Hazard* of any *Default or Disappointment*.

Let the *whole of the Case* be carefully viewed; and with what a *resplendent Glory* does the *Majesty of GOD* shine forth therein? With what awful *Attention* are we called, at the same Time to regard the *infinite Goodness* of the *LORD*, and the *Supremacy of his Authority*? For who, but *GOD*, had any *Right to appoint a Mediator*, or *Power to call* that infinitely glorious Person, *the Son of GOD* Himself, to bear and execute *so high an Office*, attended with such plunging *Difficulties* as could not possibly have been surmounted by any other?

—What a *Happiness* then should we esteem it, that it pleased the *Father*, that in *Christ* should all *Fulness dwell* ^a? Since had it not been for the *Sovereign Appointment* of the *Good-will of GOD*, our *Lord Jesus Christ* had never taken to Himself this *Honour*, to be the great *High-Priest* over the *House of GOD* ^b, or the glorious *Repository* of those *unsearchable Riches* of *Righteousness* and *Grace*, which were necessary for our *Salvation*.

Now that the *Heavenly Treasures* which are in *Christ* may be *used and improved* by the *Saints to the Glory of GOD*, the *Truths* which his *Word* reveals concerning these grand and important *Articles* are to be *received* with such a reverential *Faith*, as shall *work by Love*, and studiously *meditate* all the affectionate and suitable *Returns* of a thankful *Admiration* and humble *Praise*, of an holy *Confidence* and
Delight

^a Col. i. 19.^b Heb. v. 4, 5.

Delight in God, with an universal and chearful Submission to his Will, thro' a persevering and constant Course of new Obedience. For it is only this Faith unfeigned, that can carry in it, or lead to such an Acknowledgment of the Mystery of GOD, and of the Father, and of Christ^c, as will certainly and directly issue in the Glory of each of the Divine Persons, and in the Glory of every one of the Perfections and Attributes of the Divine Nature. But this Faith, proceeding from the Unction of the Holy One, will effectually raise the Souls in whom it dwells, to such a full and ready Declaration, that it is of GOD, and of his Love and Grace alone, that Christ is made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, as will leave no Room for any Flesh to glory in his Presence^d. And the exciting the Saints to this Improvement of the Treasures hid in Christ, is to be the constant Endeavour of Gospel-Ministers, in all their Preaching, and in all their Labours.

After a serious Reflection then, but upon that Part of the Duty of Ministers which is described under the foregoing Heads, will not the Greatness of their Work, and the Difficulty that attends it, so far appear, as to make us all cry out in the Apostle's Language of Amazement, saying, *And who is sufficient for these Things^e? Not the best of Men, unless our Saviour, according to his kind Promise, be graciously pleased to be ever with them^f.*

Yet this was the important Work in which, with an humble and steady Dependance upon the Arm of the Lord, your honoured Pastor was for very near Twenty Years employed among you. And were not the great Things I have just now mentioned,

^c Col. ii. 2.
^f Mat. xxviii. 20.

^d 1 Cor. i. 29, 30.

^e 2 Cor. ii. 16.

the Aim at which the whole Scope of *his Ministry* was directed?

You of *this Church* and *Congregation*, who statedly attended his Administrations; yea, and *other Churches* and *Congregations*, among whom *his Ministerial Labours* in the former Part of *his Life* were spent*; I am persuaded, can witness for Him, that he was a *Workman that needed not to be ashamed*†: One that engaged in his Work with solid Judgment and heavenly Skill, and went thro' it with a real Pleasure and Delight; attending upon it, according to the Measures of Health and Strength, which from Time to Time the LORD was pleased to afford Him, with Diligence and Application: And this oftentimes, of late Years especially, when under a remarkable Languor, nay even much Anguish and Pain of Body. For it was his Desire and Prayer, as he expressly declared in a Letter to a Brother of this Church, that “ if he was “ spared, it might be for the Service of his blessed “ Redeemer.” And afterwards in another, when he heard that the Church had engaged the Assistance of some Ministers in the solemn Duty of Intercession, Prayer and Supplication upon his Account; tho' in the same Letter “ he blessed GOD, that thro' Faith, in “ a living Redeemer, he could look upon Dying as “ a glorious Deliverance;” yet, said he, “ if it may “ be for Service and Usefulness, the LORD bear, and “ heal, and restore!”

But he, who like his renowned Predecessors, the Pastors of this Church†, was at best an Earthen,
is

* Before Mr. Wright was called to be Pastor of this Church, by the Disposal of Providence he had been employed for some Years in the Work of the Gospel at Hitching in Hertfordshire, at Colchester, and St. Edmund's-Bury.

† 2 Tim. ii. 15.

† These were Mr. Strong, Author of a Discourse upon the Two Covenants, under whose Ministry this Church was gathered: He was its Pastor, when it used to meet in Westminster-Abbey; and

is now like them a *broken Vessel*: And one Design of these Dispensations, and Events of Providence, is to convince us, that all the Success of the Gospel must arise, not from the Ability of any Ministers, but from the Excellency of the Power of GOD.

And for our farther Conviction of this, having considered the great Work of the Ministry of the Gospel, let us, as was proposed under the next General Head,

II. Take a View of the Weakness of the Persons employed in so great a Work.

Tho' the faithful Ministers of Christ are undoubtedly some of the best of Men, yet their Weakness, as I have before observed, is very strongly suggested, and plainly referred to, by the Comparison used in the Text, which stiles them *EARTHEN VESSELS*. And what is here implied, is so evidently and abundantly confirmed to every one's Observation, that it seems altogether needless to offer any Thing directly in the Proof of it; yet I shall attempt a short, but humbling Illustration of it in a few Particulars, which may be justly inferred from this Comparison. For it shews us,

- I. That Ministers have no suitable Qualifications for their Work, but what are given them from above.

As to Vessels in general, it is evident enough, that they cannot afford any Thing but what they have first received: They can let out no more than what is

on his Death in the Year 1654. Mr. John Rowe, was chosen Pastor there, who died in 1677. and was succeeded by the learned Mr. Theophilus Gale and Mr. Samuel Lee, and afterwards by his Son Mr. Thomas Rowe, who died in 1705. After him the Church called Mr. Foxon, who was its Pastor till 1723.

is put into them. Never was there a valuable *Treasure* found in any other, but especially not in an *Earthen Vessel*, till first some Hand had lodged it there.

Thus whatever the *Excellency* or the *Treasure* be, that is found in any eminent, godly, or useful *Minister*, it is communicated by *Christ*, who is made *Head over all Things to the Church*^h, and is wrought in him by the *Holy Spirit*, who with an uncontrollable *Sovereignty* divideth severally to every *Man*, and to every *Minister*, as He willⁱ.—If these *Servants of the Lord* are any of them formed with a superior Degree of *Natural Abilities*, either as to the *Quickness* or *Largeness* of their *Comprehension*, the *Solidity* of their *Judgment*, the *Warmth* of their *Affection*, or the *Strength* of their *Memory*; if they are favoured with any good *Natural Elocution*, *Volubility* of *Speech*, *Vivacity* or *Agreeableness* in their *Utterance*; even these remarkable and valuable *Endowments* are bestowed by the *Father of Lights*, from whom every good, as well as perfect Gift must come^k.—If they have made any happy *Progress* in the necessary and useful *Parts of Human Learning*, such as may yield them some considerable *Help* and *Advantage* in a right *Understanding* of the *Scriptures*; why, this, and all *Opportunities* for their *Improvement*, with all the *Success* of their *studious Endeavours*, were at the *Disposal*, and under the *Direction* of *God*, thro' whose *Blessing* and *Grant* they obtained them.—Are they enriched with any *distinguishing Light*, with a clear *Insight* or deep *Penetration* into the *spiritual*, *future*, and *eternal Things* of the *Gospel*? It is because the *Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of Christ*^l has taken of these sublime and heavenly Things, and made them manifest to them^m; and because the same *Spirit of Counsel and Might* has enlightened the *Eyes of their Understanding*.

D

stand-

^h Eph. i. 22.ⁱ 1 Cor. xii. 11.^k Jam. i. 17.^l Eph. i. 17.^m John xvi. 15.

*standing*ⁿ, and taught them to know the Things that are freely given to us of GOD^o.—And that their natural Capacities, their learned Acquirements, with all their spiritual Gifts, may be sanctified and crowned with Success, are they in Truth made Partakers of the Grace of GOD, the best Comment upon the Bible? This in every Degree and Measure thereof is eminently the Gift of Christ; and it is of his Fulness alone, they can any of them receive Grace for Grace^p. And if, after all, they are in any fit Capacity for Usefulness and Service in the great Work of the Ministry, they must every one for himself respectively with the deepest Humility acknowledge, as Paul did, *By the Grace of GOD I am what I am*^a. For they have Nothing that is likely to be either useful for themselves, or beneficial to others, but what they have received according to the merciful and gracious Distribution of their Heavenly Lord. This is taught us by the Comparison: And so it is,

2. That when Ministers are furnished with the most happy Qualifications, yet they cannot do any Thing in their Work to purpose without continual Assistance from the Lord.

Has an Earthen Vessel any Power, to convey its Contents to those for whom they are designed, or to apply them to the Uses for which they are intended? No more can the Ministers of the Gospel, without a fresh Anointing from above, exert themselves in their Work, or use their Talents in any profitable Manner, to the spiritual Benefit or real Edification of the People. As the Furniture of Ministers, and all their rich Endowments, come from GOD; so the useful Exercise of their Gifts depends upon his powerful and gracious Assistance. The same Apostle, who confessed that his

Fitness

ⁿ Eph. i. 18.^o 1 Cor. ii. 12.^p John i. 16.^a 1 Cor. xv. 10.

Fitness for his Office arose from the *Grace of GOD*, readily acknowledged, that in all his *Diligence and Labours*, it was this *Grace* that wrought mightily in him^r. Without it the *Apostle Paul* himself was not sufficient, neither can any of the *Ministers of Christ* be able, to think a good Thought^s, to teach the Truth as it is in *Jesus*^t, or to speak as becometh the *Oracles of GOD*^u. If his Presence be withdrawn, then, instead of speaking in the Evidence and Demonstration of the Spirit, or preaching with Power^w, it will soon be perceived, that *Ministers* of the greatest Abilities are sadly straitened, and quickly become flat and dull, dead and lifeless in their Ministrations. For all their Activity, Vigour, and Fervour in their Work depend entirely upon his Assistance. Again,

3. *Ministers can bear Nothing*, but as they are supported and upheld.

Besides the *Afflictions* incident to them as *Men* and as *Christians*, they have their peculiar Difficulties and Trials to which their Office does expose them. Their Work is to preach down the Kingdom of Sin and Satan, and to preach up the Kingdom of a crucified *Jesus* and despised Saviour. The Enmity, which ever remains between the two Seeds, is a constant Ground of Controversy and Opposition. And when any fresh Trouble or Persecution arises, the sharpest and hottest Part of the Storm generally falls upon the *Ministers of Christ*, and they must bear it. It is often their Lot to be despised and trampled upon by Men, to be troubled on every Side, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down^x. If they will be diligent, faithful, and zealous in the Work of the Lord, they must expose themselves to the Displeasure and Fury of the Adversary. And since they are but *Earthen Vessels*, when the *Enemy* rages, should

D 2

not

^r Col. i. 29. ^s 2 Cor. iii. 5. ^t Eph. iv. 21. ^u 1 Pet. iv. 11. ^w 1 Cor. ii. 4. ^x 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.

not the Lord uphold, they must be quickly dashed in Pieces. Under the Increase, or long Continuance of their Troubles, if left to themselves, their Hearts would faint, and they would utterly fail and be discouraged: They might easily be insnared into the like Temptation with the Prophet^y, to quit their Work and give it over. If under heavy Discouragements such feeble Creatures are kept close to their Duty, sure it must be, because, tho' weak in themselves, they are strong in the Lord^z: For it is only when his Grace is mighty in them^a, that they can surmount the least Difficulty, or conquer their own unbelieving Fears. The Comparison farther shews us,

4. That the best of Ministers have such Flaws and Blemishes, as would defeat the Design of their Ministry, if the Lord did not mercifully interpose.

They are Men, clothed with Mortality; they cannot therefore but have their Defects: They are sinful Men, and clothed with Corruption; and must needs therefore have their Blemishes too. The Law made Men Priests that had Infirmit^y^b; and if under the Gospel none were to be its Ministers but such as are perfect, none in this World could be found to preach it: For in the present State all Men are imperfect. Even the Apostles themselves, tho' blest with an infallible and perfect Inspiration, yet they had their personal Defects and sinful Blemishes. Did not Paul blame Peter, and that justly too, for going thro' Fear into a Piece of Dissimulation^c? And it seems also, as if Paul himself was not to be wholly acquitted, with respect to the sharp Contention, which happened at Antioch, between Him and Barnabas^d. And the Apostle John, speaking of the Imperfections of the Saints

^y Jer. xx. 9.

^b Heb. vii. 28.

^z 2 Cor. xii. 10.

^c Gal. ii. 11, — 14.

^a Gal. ii. 8,

^d Acts xv. 39.

Saints in the present State, joins *himself* in the Number: *If we say we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us^e.* It is owing therefore to the Care of *Him that holdeth the seven Stars in his Right Hand, and walketh in the midst of the seven Golden Candlesticks^f,* that the Ministry is not more frequently blamed, than it is; even to the defeating the Design of the Gospel, thro' the Defects and Blemishes of those that bear this Office. For at best they are but *Earthen Vessels*; and for this Reason,

5. Even Time itself will quickly make them moulder and decay, till Death shall break and lay them aside.

Ministers are of the same frail and mortal Make with the rest of Mankind. They are subject to the same Decay of Nature, the same Diseases both of Body and Mind, the same Casualties and Occurrences, and the same Infirmities of Age, as others are. But, besides these Things, they have their peculiar Disadvantages. A Closeness of Application, and Intenseness of Thought in the Study; a Frequency, Painfulness, and Fervour in Preaching; their constant Labours and Watchings; their tender Sympathy with the Afflicted, which upon one Occasion and another is kept almost always burning; and under all, the Want of Opportunity for a due Measure of Bodily Exercise; are such peculiar Difficulties in their Case, as naturally tend to exhaust their Spirits, and wear out their Strength and Constitution, faster than what is ordinary in the common Circumstances of Life.

A due Attention to the brief Illustration, attempted under this and the preceding Particulars, may sufficiently

ciently convince us of the *Weakness* of the *best* of *Ministers*, and prevent our wondering that they should be compared to *Earthen Vessels*. It rather may surprize us, that God should make use of such feeble *Instruments*, in carrying on so great a *Work* as they are employed in. But *this Dispensation* the *Text* accounts for, assigning *this* as the *Reason*, that the *Excellency* of the *Power* may be of *GOD*, and not of *Man*. I shall therefore, in the next Place,

III. Shew, that *the Success* of the *Gospel* must needs redound to *GOD's Glory*.

This may be made evident from a *comparative View* of *Two Things*.

[1.] The *happy Effects* that are produced under a *Gospel-Ministry*, when it is *successful*. And,

[2.] The *utter Insufficiency* of *Ministers* of the greatest *Abilities*, to produce those *Effects* by any *Power* that is in them.

[1.] Let us take a *View* of the *happy Effects* produced under a *Gospel-Ministry*, when it is *successful*.

These are really *wonderful*; and the better they are *understood*, the more they will be *admired*. By *Reason* indeed of their sublime and heavenly *Nature*, the *Greatness* and *Glory* of them cannot rightly be *discerned* by *carnal Persons*. But how *abstruse* soever they may seem to be to such, yet the *Believer* from his own *Experience* can see enough in them to raise his *Admiration*. For a *successful Ministry* is ever attended with very *marvellous Effects*; such as these which follow.

1. Thereby the *strong Holds* of *Sin* and *Satan* are *demolished*.

These

These *strong Holds* are, the *Ignorance* and *Errors* of the *Mind*, the domineering and tyrannical *Lusts* of the *Flesh*, the *Unbelief* and *Prejudices* of the *Heart* against *Christ*, and against the *Way of Salvation* by *Him*, with the *worldly Maxims* and *carnal Reasonings* that have gained the *Ascendant* over *Man*. These are *Evils*, to which, by the righteous *Curse* of the *broken Law*, our *Nature* is *subjected*.

But when the *Gospel* is made *successful*, what a *glorious Deliverance* is wrought from all these hurtful and threatening *Mischiefs*? Then, how have *they*, that loved *Darkness*, and bated *Light*^g, been instructed and made *wise to Salvation*^h? They, who before the *Gospel* had any good *Effect* upon them, made a *Mock* at *Sin*ⁱ, and a *Jest* of all *serious Religion*, have then *changed their Sentiments*, and could no longer call *Evil Good*, or *Good Evil*^k. They, that were full of *Prejudices* against the *Doctrine of Christ*, have been so far wrought upon, as, under many *Difficulties* and much *Opposition*, to make an *open Profession* of the *Evangelical Truths* which they once *denied*, and to contend earnestly for the *Faith*^l, which with much *Bitterness* and *Rancour* they once *reproached*. They, who were formerly so fond of their *secular Interest*, that they thought no *Pains* too great to be taken, nor hardly any secret *Fraud* too vile to be practised, so that they might but grow *rich* and *great* in the *World*, have at length become as a *weaned Child*^m; and have really preferred, as well they might, a *gracious Adoption* into the *Family of God*, before any *worldly Emoluments*, or *temporal Honours* whatever.

And would to God, the *Ministry* of his *Servants* in all our *Assemblies* might be crowned with a *Multitude* of such remarkable *Instances of Success* as these!

^g John iii. 19, 20.

^h 2 Tim. iii. 15.

ⁱ Prov. xiv. 9.

^k Isai. v. 20.

^l Jude, ver. 3.

^m Psal. cxxi. 2.

these! Blessed be his holy Name, there are, even in these declining Times, *some among us* who can testify, that their *Errors* have been *rooted out*; their *Prejudices* against God and Godliness, against the Lord and his Christ, have been *conquered*; their *Love of Sin*, which is ever the *Support* of the Devil's Kingdom, has been *slain*; and all their *worldly sinful Politicks* have been *cast away*, and *exchanged* for the wise and holy *Rules of GOD's Commands*, and those most pure and excellent *Politicks* which are taught us in the *Bible*.

Thus has the *Ministry of the Word* been mighty and effectual, in *casting down* the proud *Imaginations* and carnal Reasonings of Sinners, with every *high Thing* that *exalted itself* against the *Knowledge of GOD*, and in *bringing into Captivity* every *Thought* to the *Obedience of Christ*ⁿ: And hereby the strong Holds of Satan have been *demolished*: Again,

2. *A successful Ministry* is the *Means of producing* a true and saving *Faith in Jesus Christ*.

To *bring Souls to Christ*, and to *unite them by Faith unto Him*, is one special and grand *Design* of a *Gospel-Ministry*: And when *Success* attends it, Persons are prevailed upon to *come to Jesus*, to *receive Him*, and *trust in Him* as their *only Hope* and *Saviour*. And what a *wonderful Effect* is this? What *supernatural* and *surprizing Acts* are included in the *Faith* that truly *justifies* and *saves*? Acts of the deepest *Humility*, and strictest *Self-Denial*; Acts of the highest *Reverence* for God, and of the most endeared *Affection* to that *Jesus*, who was once the *Sinner's* greatest *Aversion*.

Is it not *very strange*, to see a *Man quit the Law* as a *Covenant of Works*, since our very *Nature* is *wedded to it*? How *loth* are we to be *dead to that*,
and

and married to another^o, tho' it be to *Christ*, an infinitely better Husband? Is there any Thing a Man is more unwilling to part with, than a secret Dependance upon his own Righteousness; tho' his best, since the Fall, is no better in God's Account than polluted Rags, or filthy Garments^p? Is it not evident, that while in many Instances very Shame will engage a Man to put away Sin, yet at the same Time Pride and Self-Flattery will make him hold his legal Righteousness the faster?

Oh the Difficulty of perswading Men to lay aside those Expectations of Happiness for the Sake of their own Obedience, which sooner or later must issue in the sorest Disappointment!—How difficult is it, to perswade those especially to do this, who have had a Religious Education; who from their Youth have led a Moral Life, been regular and sober in their Behaviour, and constantly engaged, it may be, in the External Performance of holy Duties; who have been ready therefore to think within themselves, that they had much wherein to trust, and something perhaps whereof to glory! How hard, to prevail with such to renounce their own Righteousness! Or if this be done professedly, yet still how difficult to bring the Soul, to give its unfeigned, its hearty and full Consent, in such an humbling Matter, as that of betaking itself to the Righteousness of another for its only Sanctuary and Refuge of Salvation!

Is it not wonderful to see them, who had been long with the greatest Earnestness seeking a Righteousness, if not avowedly, yet secretly, and as it were, by the Works of the Law^q, at length to seek it by Faith, in Christ alone; and now to submit with thankful Admiration to the Righteousness of his Obedience and Cross, which before in their Hearts they could never once approve of?—Wonderful sure it is, that a crucified Jesus should become precious and dear to
E those,

those, to whom all their Life before He had been as a Stone of Stumbling, and a Rock of Offence.—— Yet when the *Ministry of the Word* is crowned with *Success*, these are *some of the surprizing Effects and wonderful Changes*, which are *produced thereby*. Further,

3. It works a *thorough Renovation of Soul*, with an *universal Change in Life and Conversation*.

The *Inward Change* of the *Heart*, tho' secret and invisible, is nevertheless *real*, and *universal*.—— The great Work of *Regeneration* is not a feigned, but a *real Change*; as the *many, many Thousands*, who have had the happy *Experience* of it, can with a sacred *Pleasure testify*. In a *Metaphorical and Spiritual Sense*, the *Blind* have really been made to *see*, the *Deaf* to *hear*, the *Dumb* to *speak*, and the *Lame* to *walk*, yea even *leap for Joy*. Not only have the *Diseased* been *healed*, and *Lepers cleansed*; but the very *Dead in Trespasses and Sins* have been *quickened*, and *raised to a Life* truly *Spiritual and Divine*.—— The *Change* is also *universal*. They that are *born again* are *renewed in the Spirit of their Minds*, and in *all the Faculties of the Soul*. The *Understanding* is *savingly enlightened*, the *Will* truly *sanctified*, and all the *Affections* made *spiritual and holy*. *Old Things* pass away, and *all Things* become *new*. They have *new Desires*, and *new Hopes*. Their *Fears* are *new*, their *Joys* and *Sorrows* *new*. And it must needs be thus, since they have all of them *new Aims*, and *new Endeavours*. They *love the Good*, which they *once hated* and *purposely shunn'd*; and *bate the Evil*, which they *once loved* and *eagerly pursued*. They are taken into a *new State*; they enter into a *new World*; and accordingly resolve upon *new Measures*.

And

And hence the *Inward Renovation* of the Soul is ever attended with an *universal Change* in *Life* and *Conversation*. Corruptions being healed, and the Image of God restored, the *Hearts of Men* are set right for the humble and faithful Discharge of every Duty. When a *Ministry* is truly *successful*, Men are made not barely *Nominal*, but *Real* and *Practical Christians*, who from a *Vital Principle* live *Religion*, as well as *profess* it to God's Honour.

And how *glorious an Effect* of the Gospel is this, for *vile Sinners* to be made *new Creatures*? Would it not be *surprising*, to see the *Ethiopian change his Skin*, or the *Leopard his Spots*^u; to see an *Adamant* melted and *dissolved*; or to see *Wolves* turned into *Sheep*, yea *Lions* and *Tigers* into *Lambs*? Was it not *wonderful*, (think seriously, I beseech you,) was it not *wonderful* to see *Jordan driven back*, and its *Streams* made to *run upwards*? And yet *Wonders* as great, nay, in some *Regard* infinitely greater than these, are certainly wrought, when *Sinners* are converted and turned to the Lord; when, with their own Consent and Prayer, their *Hearts* are divorced from their bewitching *Idols* and beloved *Lusts*; when they, who had all their Days been casting the *Law* of God behind their *Backs*^w, are now made to look to their *Maker*, and their *Eyes* to have *Respect* to the *Holy One of Israel*^x; aiming in all Things to please the Lord, whatever may be the *Displeasure*, or the *Sufferings*, which, upon that Account, they may meet with from any of the *Adversaries* of God and Religion.

But the Time would fail me to make a particular Mention of all the happy and wonderful Effects, which ever attend a *successful Ministry*. Now therefore,

En 2 [2.] Let

^u Jer. xiii. 23.

^w Neh. ix. 26.

^x Isa. xvii. 7.

[2.] Let us view the *utter Insufficiency* of the *most able Ministers*, to produce these *admirable Effects* by any *Power* that is in them.

It is Pity indeed, but there should be a diligent *Enquiry* made, into the *real and true Cause* of the *glorious Effects* of which I have been speaking: And the least serious *Thought* may soon convince us, that *this must lie*, not in the *Weakness of Man*, but in the *Power of GOD*. The *Insufficiency of Ministers* for *Works* so great as these, of *binding the strong Man armed*, of *quickenning dead Sinners*, and *reforming their Lives*, might be evinced from various *Considerations*: I shall only point at *Two*, which I am perswaded will afford a *strong Proof* of the *Head* I am now upon; for,

1. *Ministers*, even of the greatest *Abilities*, cannot by their own *Strength* come up to a *due Use* of the *Means appointed*, that such *Effects* might be produced. And,

2. *These Effects* are above the *Power* of any *Means* within the *Reach* of *Ministers*, tho' they should be used in the most regular and perfect *Manner*.

1. *Ministers* of the greatest *Abilities* cannot by their own *Strength* come up to a *due Use* of the *Means appointed*, that such *Effects* may be produced.

These *Means* are, — an holy and diligent *Preparation* in the *Study*, — a publick and faithful *Administration* of the *Word* and *Ordinances* of *God*, — with an *Exemplary Walk* thro' the whole of a *Minister's Conversation*.

The *Work* of the *Study* is *Reading*, *Meditation*, and *Prayer*; that they may have their *Instructions* from *GOD*, that they may be well acquainted with the

the *Mind of Christ*, may stand in his *Counsel*^y, and have themselves a *clear Understanding* of the Things which they are to publish to others. And as to this it cannot be forgotten, that tho' *Paul* was placed in the *biggest Office* in the Church, and favoured with the *richest Anointing* that perhaps was ever bestowed upon any of the *Ministers of Christ* upon Earth, yet he acknowledged, that of himself he was *not sufficient*, any more than any of his *Fellow-Labourers*, to think any Thing as of himself^z, which might be likely to promote the great *Design* of the Gospel. How then shall *Christ's ordinary Ministers*, who both as to *Gifts and Graces* every Way fall so vastly short of the least of the *Apostles*, be able without the *special Help* of the LORD to come at those *holy Thoughts*, those sublime, those spiritual, and divine *Meditations*, which might be instructive, awakening, and quickening to the *People*?

Or after the most careful *Preparation in private*, when they come into the *publick Congregation*, if the LORD does not grant them his *gracious Assistance*, how shall they be able to preach the *Truth as it is in Jesus*^a? — Or if this should be done with that *Soundness of Speech* which cannot be condemned^b, how yet shall they speak as becometh the *Oracles of GOD*^c? so speak, that *Multitudes* shall believe; which was the Case as to *Paul* and his *Fellow-Traveller*^d. How shall they speak with that *Reverence and Awe*, which is suitable to the *Majesty* of the great GOD, from whom the Message comes, and in whose Name it is to be delivered; or with that *Fulness and Liberty*, which suit with the *infinite Goodness* of the Saviour, whose amazing *Condescension* is to be proclaimed? Or how shall they speak with that *Seriousness and Solemnity*, which become the *vast Importance and eternal Moment* of the Things which are

^y Jer. xxiii. 18.^z 2 Cor. iii. 5.^a Eph. iv. 21.^b Tit. ii. 8.^c 1 Pet. iv. 11.^d Acts xiv. 1.

are to be declared ; or with that *Vebemence* and *Fervour*, that *Vigour*, and *Boldness of Spirit*, as shall shew them to be *in Earnest* ; and that they are not like those who proclaim *News in the Streets*, not regarding whether it be *true or false* ; but that they *really believe*, and are *fully assured* of the Certainty of *what they preach*, and would gladly have the *People* be *perswaded* of it too ? — Or if this be done, then how at the same Time shall they *teach* with that *Gentleness*, *Patience*, and *Meekness*, with that *moving* and *winning Pathos*, as shall give a real Conviction of their *tender Compassion* for the Souls of Men, and of an *heartly Concern* for their Salvation ? — It is *no easy Thing*, as all in the *Ministry* that have seriously attempted it will allow, to *speak* like *Boanerges*, *Sons of Thunder*, and at the same Time to *preach* like a *Barnabas*, a *Son of Consolation*. Who is *sufficient* thus to *preach Christ*, warning every Man, and teaching every Man in all *Wisdom*, aiming in all Singleness of Heart to *present every Man perfect in Christ Jesus* ?

What *Ministers*, without *special Assistance* and remarkable Help from the *Holy Ghost*, can do this with *Diligence* and *Constancy*, with *Pureness*, with *Knowledge* and *Long-Suffering*^f ; and this under strong *Opposition*, under heavy *Afflictions*, and sinking *Discouragements* ? In all their *Conversation*, shewing themselves a *Pattern of good Works*^g ; and behaving at all Times not only in that *inoffensive Manner*, that the *Ministry* be not *blamed*^h ; but acting upon all Occasions with that *Humility*, *Condescension*, and *Self-Denial* ; with that *Gravity*, *Simplicity*, and *godly Sincerity*ⁱ ; with that *Resolution*, *Faithfulness*, and *Zeal*, in the *Cause of Christ* ; as shall make it manifest, that the *exalting the Lord*, by gaining Souls unto

^e Col. i. 28. ^f 2 Cor. vi. 6. ^g Tit. ii. 7. ^h 2 Cor. vi. 3.
ⁱ 2 Cor. i. 12.

unto Him, is truly *the End* both of *their Conversion* and *their Preaching* too.

If any should be so *stupid*, or so abominably *conceited* and *vain*, as to pretend that they are of *themselves* sufficient for such difficult Service as this, they do at once hereby plainly demonstrate, that they *have not Christ* to be *their Master*; for it is one *fundamental Principle* in the Doctrine which he has taught, that *without Him* his *Disciples* and *Ministers* *can do nothing*^k. Nay,

2. The salutary *Effects* which have been mentioned, are *above* the Power of *any Means* within the *Reach* of *Ministers*, tho' they should be *used* in the most *regular* and *perfect Manner*.

When *Ministers* have exerted themselves to the utmost, yea tho' they could attend to *all the Parts* of *their Duty* with the greatest *Exactness*, even to a *Perfection*; yet, after all, the *Conversion* of a *Soul* is a *Work infinitely above their Power*. For the *Gospel* itself, the *Preaching* whereof is the great *Means* to be used to *that End*, has no *natural Efficacy* in it. If it had, then it might be expected, that it would *at all Times* have the *same Success* upon all that hear it. But tho', like *the Sun*, it makes an uninterrupted, a certain, and speedy *Progress* in the *Circuit* appointed for it, yet it does not *produce its Effects* in a *Way of natural Operation*, as the *Sun* does: For this *enlightens* and *warms*, wherever it *shines*; whereas among those upon whom *the Gospel* *shines*, some *believe*, while others *believe not*: And they that have been *warmed* and greatly *refreshed* by its *reviving Beams* at one *Time*, have felt *little or nothing* of its *cheering Influences* at another; tho' as to the *clear shin-*
ing

ing of its Light, no Difference at all could be perceived.

The *Weakness* of a Gospel-Ministry, and its utter *Insufficiency* of itself to produce the admirable Effects with which it is honoured, may be illustrated by several Passages recorded in Scripture; which tho' they were not immediately designed, yet they are remarkably suited to give us this Instruction. I may instance particularly in the *Waters* of the *Pool of Bethesda*, which could never heal, but when impregnated with a supernatural Virtue by the *Descent of an Angel* from Heaven¹. And again, in *Ezekiel's prophesying upon the Bones*^m: There is naturally no more Virtue in the *Letter of the Gospel*, or the *Breath* of them that preach it, to quicken dead Sinners, than there was in the *Words* of the *Prophet* to make the dry Bones live. Nor was the *Sounding of the Trumpets* in the Days of *Joshua*, an adequate Cause of the sudden Fall of the strong and impregnable *Walls of Jericho*ⁿ. Nor, yet again, had the *Light of many Lamps* discovered at once when the *Pitchers were broken*, nor the Addition of the loud Echo of the *Shoutings of the Soldiers*, when without striking a Blow they impetuously cried, *The Sword of the LORD, and of Gideon*, any direct Tendency or Force in themselves to work the utter Overthrow of the mighty Host of *Midian*^o. No more have the diligent and painful Endeavours of the most eminent Ministers any natural Efficacy in them, to demolish the strong Holds of Satan, or to build up the Kingdom and Interest of Christ.

If any Means could in a natural Way have produced those blessed Effects, it must surely have been the Personal Ministry of our Lord Himself: And yet to teach his People in this present State, to prize his Spiritual Presence above his Bodily, he was pleased

¹ John v. 2,—7. ^m Ezek. xxxvii. 4,—8. ⁿ Josh. vi. 20.

^o Judg. vii. 20.

to crown one Sermon preached by Peter after his Ascension with more Success^d, than as far as appears ever attended all the Ministerial Labours of his own Life.

If the mean Services therefore of these Earthen Vessels do at any Time become useful to the Good of Souls, it must be, because their Ministry in the Gospel is accompanied with the Power of GOD. For it is only thro' the Excellency of the Power of his Omnipotent Arm, that the Foolishness of Preaching can become effectual to the Salvation of them that believe^e.

Having thus considered what was proposed as to the Doctrinal Part of the Discourse, I shall draw to a Conclusion, by endeavouring,

IV. To assist in a suitable Application.

The Subject which has been enlarged upon speaks distinctly, both to Ministers, and People.

It teaches Ministers a Variety of Instructions, with Regard to their Inward Temper, and their Outward Behaviour. Here the Time will not allow me to be very particular; yet since Duty will not suffer me to be wholly silent, I shall with Submission offer a few Hints under the following Heads. And from what has been delivered it is manifest, that Ministers are bound to be Faithful, Humble, and Diligent.

1. Ministers are bound to be Faithful.

Are they Vessels in which the LORD has placed a Treasure of spiritual Light and heavenly Wisdom; and is what they have received deposited with them in Trust for the Benefit of others; how necessary then

F

is it, that all their *Abilities* and *Furniture* for their *Work* be ever attended with a *Promptness* to it? As far as they have been *enlightened in the Knowledge of the Mysteries of the Gospel*, they are to endeavour to make them known; remembering the Words of our Lord to his Disciples, *Freely you have received, freely give*^r. They are to be *apt to teach*^s: They are to *teach the Congregation* whatever God has revealed in his Word, and to deliver nothing to the People, but what from thence they have first received of the Lord^t. Their *Doctrine* is to be a *pure Doctrine*; and all their *Instructions* about the *Worship* and *Obedience* of the Gospel, are to be *pure Instructions*. They are to *preach the Truth as it is in Jesus*^u; and to watch, that it may neither be *adulterated* with impure Mixtures, *sophisticated* by any Fallacy or Diffimulation, nor any Way *debased* or *flattened* by being made to *savour of the Vessel*, which without the utmost Care is apt to carry a *Tang* of its *earthly Original*.

How clearly does the *Description* in the *Text* further point out this *Duty of Faithfulness*, shewing that *Ministers* are to *take heed to themselves*^w, as well as to their *Doctrine*. They are to be as careful about the *Regularity* and *Holiness of their Walk*, as about the *Purity of the Truths* which they are sent to deliver. If the Persons *under the Law*, who did but *bear the Vessels of the Lord*, were to be *holy*^x; how remarkably *holy* then should the *Ministers of the Gospel* be, who are themselves *his Vessels*? How *watchful* should be their *Care*, and how *earnest* their *Cries to the Lord*, that *they* above all Men may be *kept unspotted from the Flesh and the World*^y? that the *People* may never be laid under the *Temptation of disliking*, if not *loathing*, their *spiritual Food*,
by

^r Mat. x. 8. ^s 2 Tim. ii. 24. ^t 1 Cor. xi. 23. ^u Eph. iv. 21. ^w Acts xx. 28. ^x Isai. lii. 11. ^y James i. 27.

by reason of its being brought in a *dirty Vessel*.
Again,

2. *Ministers are obliged to be Humble.*

The *Comparison* in the *Text* is a *standing Check* upon their *Pride*, and a *constant Bar* to their *vain Ostentation*. It warns them in a very particular Manner, that they *never think of themselves above what is meet*; but that after their *highest Attainments*, and *greatest Success*, they always *think soberly*². They are of themselves *poor empty Vessels*, and have *nothing that is valuable*, but what they have *first received*^a. Let them *not glory* then, as if their *Talents* had been *originally their own*, and not merely what have been *given them from above*. — They are represented too, as *Earthen Vessels*; and these, it is well known, are for *common Use*, while *Vessels of Silver or Gold* are carefully *laid up*, or put out of the Way. This shews, that *Ministers* are to *behave with an engaging Condescension*; not *lording it over GOD's Heritage*^b, but *discovering a Readiness* to be the *Servants of all*, even of the *Meanest of the Flock*, for the *Good of their Souls to Christ's Glory*. — This Character also teaches, that such vile *Dust and Ashes* should ever attempt to *speak with the deepest Humility and Self-Abasement*, when they are engaged in *presenting to God the Confessions and Supplications of the People*; and with the most *reverential Awe*, when they are to *deliver to the People a Message from the Great and Holy GOD*. Upon such solemn Occasions, how *reverent and humble* should *Ministers* be, remembering that *their Original was of the Earth*, and that *their very Nature* now is much *debased by Sin*. — Nay, it further shews, that as *all their Labours in the Gospel* should be so-

F 2

lemnly

² Rom. xii. 3.

^a 1 Cor iv. 7.

^b 1 Pet. v. 3.

leimnly undertaken in the Name of the Lord, so they should be seriously attempted in a constant Dependence upon his Strength; for all their Sufficiency is of GOD^c.

And if they have but the least Measure of the Humility which this Subject directs to, they will not dare to assume to themselves any Part of the Glory of their Success; but will carefully instruct the People, as the Apostles did, that whatever healing or mighty Effects are wrought under their Ministry, they are all produced thro' the Efficacy of the Grace of GOD, and not by any Power or Holiness of their own^d; For they are weak and sinful Creatures, whose most sedulous Endeavours will be utterly ineffectual, unless the Arm of the Lord shall be revealed^e. But yet,

3. Ministers are enjoined to be Diligent.

They must be Diligent to lay in, and Diligent to lay out. The Comparison used in the Text, if duly considered, affords very cogent Arguments to excite them to Diligence in both Respects: For they are but Earthen Vessels.

Indeed as to Vessels of Silver or Gold, tho' found entirely without any Thing in them, yet they may be of considerable Value, upon Account of the Metal of which they are made: But if Earthen Vessels are empty and void of all that is useful, they can be but of little Worth. That which makes Ministers therefore to be truly valuable, and likely to be of Service, is the Heavenly Treasure with which they are filled. Ought not Ministers then to give themselves to Reading, Meditation, and Prayer^f? that they may be Men full of the Holy Ghost^g: — Full of the Knowledge of GOD, and of his Son Jesus Christ whom He has sent^h: — Full of the Scriptures, having the Word

^c 2 Cor. iii. 5.

^d Acts iii. 12, 16.

^e Isa. liii. 1.

^f 1 Tim. iii. 13, 15.

^g Acts vi. 3.

^h John xvii. 3.

Word of Christ dwelling richly in themⁱ, that they may be able to give to their Lord's Household their Portion of Meat in its Season^k:— And full of devout Affections, of ardent and holy Dispositions, that they may be thoroughly furnished for every good Work^l, as well as every Word, that may be useful to awaken, humble, and convert, to win Souls to Christ, to promote Holiness, to beget and maintain spiritual Peace and Comfort, and to help Believers safe thro' this World unto that which is inconceivably better.

The Consideration of their feeble Frame, and that they must shortly put off their earthly Tabernacle^m, should engage Ministers to be diligent also in laying out. *An Earthen Vessel may soon be broken in Pieces: These we are sure, must shortly be so. And for this Reason, while Life and Strength are spared, they are to be constant and indefatigable in the Pursuit of the great Ends of their Calling; diligently working, while it is Day, before the Night of Death cometh, wherein no Man 'can workⁿ; being willing to spend and be spent^o to the Honour of Christ, and for the Good of Souls.*

But this Subject speaks as distinctly to the People who hear the Gospel, as it does to the Ministers who are to preach it: My further Duty therefore lies immediately with them; and particularly with You, my Dear Friends, who are now under the sorrowful Conviction, that we have this Treasure of a Gospel-Ministry in Earthen Vessels. Of this the Providence of God has formerly within the Memory of many of You, and lately by the Death of Mr. Wright, and of the Ministers of some other Congregations round about You, given a very afflicting and sensible Demonstration. It will be well, if what is declared in the Text to be the Design of this Divine Dispen-

ⁱ Col. iii. 16.^k Luke xii. 42.^l 2 Tim. iii. 17.^m 2 Pet. i. 14.ⁿ John ix. 4.^o 2 Cor. xii. 15

Dispensation, may be really accomplished, and manifestly confirmed in your own Experience: Happy, if indeed the Excellency of the Power of GOD, in making the Gospel successful, might be hereby rendered more perspicuous to your believing View, and more glorious in your reverential and affectionate Esteem! That this may be the delightful Issue of these Things, let me solemnly address You upon Three Heads.

[1.] Consider seriously, how You should treat the Gospel itself, that invaluable Treasure.

Enough I think has been said already, to shew that the Gospel, or the faithful Ministry of it, is a Treasure. And since it is called so in the Text, the very Term does naturally suggest, that the Gospel should be highly valued, and well improved.

1. Let it be highly valued.

The Gospel is a Treasure of such a transcendent Nature, that it has in GOD's spiritual Kingdom, the like serviceable and useful Design, as Money has in the Kingdoms and States of this World. And what Solomon says of Money in a civil Sense, is true of the Gospel in a spiritual, even that it answers all Things; and much in the same Way too, as Money does. For tho' the Gospel, in the mere Letter, or bare Ministry of it, cannot be of any Service, to relieve or comfort distressed Souls, any more than Money by its intrinsic Virtue could feed, clothe, or heal the Body; yet it is the Means of our coming at all that is needful for our spiritual and eternal Salvation. It is this in the Hand of the Spirit, that is an effectual Means of revealing Christ, the glorious and only Redeemer of his Church and People: This is the fit and

and only ordinary Means, appointed to direct the Soul to Christ, yea, and to produce a saving Faith in Him; to lead the Believer into a Communion with Him; and thus to bring the Soul into a real, tho' gradual Participation of all the Heavenly Felicities, in the full Possession whereof the true and everlasting Blessedness of Man consists. In this Respect it may be said of the Gospel, that it answers all Things; even as to all, that can be either useful, or comfortable to the Soul.

—How highly then should this be valued? It is justly to be esteemed above all earthly Riches, yea, more than your necessary Food. For when Believers have seen an End of all Perfection in the Creature, they shall then find the Usefulness of the Gospel to be of an exceeding large Extent, without all Bounds or Limits.

“The Gospel,” as Bishop Reynolds has expressed it, much after the following Manner, “is the Patent and Charter of a Christian; all that he has to shew for his Salvation. It is the Treasure of his Wealth, and the Security of all his Privileges; the Promises of GOD therein contained being all he has to trust to, either for this Life or another. It is the Armour of a Christian; all that he has to hold up against the Temptations and Conflicts of his worst Enemies.—It is the only Glass of a Christian, wherein he may see his own Face, and so learn to be humble, to deny himself, and renounce his own Righteousness; and wherein he may see the Face of GOD in Christ, and so learn to desire and follow him.”

Let the Gospel, and its Ministry then, be valued highly. Do you of this destitute Church be very careful, that your late worthy Pastor may have a faithful Successor. Think no Diligence, Importunity, or Continuance in Prayer, no Solicitude, Caution, or Pains, no Self-Denial, Patience, or Inconvenience, too much, or too great, to be submitted to, exercised, or employed,

ployed, that in God's Time and Way, thro' his special Direction and merciful Regards, you may again be favoured with a sound and truly evangelical Ministry; that thro' the Blessing of the LORD upon it, you may be built up on your most Holy Faith; and being firmly established, and greatly multiplied, may be kept in the Love of GOD, looking for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal Life^t.

2. Let the Gospel be well improved.

Suffer it not to lie by neglected: But use it, as a Man does his Money, that it may serve the Necessities and Purposes of Life. Use it, as Merchants do good Bills of sufficient Credit, which they carry to Marts, or publick Places where all Sorts of Commodities are to be had, that by Means thereof they may get a Supply of all they need, or seek for.—Thus are Believers, in the Actings of Faith, by humble Prayer and Supplication to go to the Throne of Grace, carrying with them the rich and free Promises of the Word of GOD, which are truly valuable, infinitely beyond the best Notes under the Hand of any Man, or any Company whatever. For no Gospel-Promise, that is humbly presented in the Name of Christ at the Foot-stool of that Throne, shall ever be refused Acceptance there.—This is to buy Wine and Milk, without Money and without Price^u. This is the Use and Improvement you are to make of the Gospel, as called a Treasure: You are with a thankful Admiration to receive and embrace its Promises, and then to plead them humbly and earnestly at the Throne of Grace; and to do both, thro' Faith in an once crucified, but now risen and exalted Saviour. And Oh that the Arm of the Lord might be revealed, that Multitudes might thus improve this Treasure, that they might be rich towards GOD^w, rich in Faith

^t Jude, ver. 20, 21.

^u Isai. lv. 1.

^w Luke xii. 21.

Faith^x and *good-Works*^y, in all that is truly valuable, good, and holy!

Here then let every Member of this bereaved Church, every One in this mourning Congregation, make a solemn Pause, and faithfully recollect, what just Answer can be given, should the Question now be put, "Is this your daily Practice"? Happy the Persons, whose Consciences can testify this to be their sincere Concern, and constant Care! The Gospel has come unto you, not in Word only, but also in Power, and in the Holy Ghost^z. Blessed are you among the Churches! blessed is the Fruit, which the Gospel has produced in your Souls! and blessed are you that have believed; for there shall be a Performance of those Things which have been told you from the Lord^a.

But as to you, Sirs, that have long sate under the Droppings of the Sanctuary, and have never yet been softened into Tears under a Sense of your Guilt and spiritual Wants; never quickened to an humble, believing, daily Approach unto GOD, for all the suitable Supplies to be had in Christ, as the Gospel has informed you; what profitable Use, or good Improvement, can you pretend to have made of the faithful Ministry which you have long enjoyed? You that still love Darknes rather than Light^b, and prefer some secret Lust before a Saviour, think with yourselves, does not the Curse of the Law lie full against you, and is it not charged with a double Vengeance? For you have not only by your Sins destroyed yourselves^c, but thro' your cursed Unbelief and Pride of Heart, you have despised the precious and only Saviour, whose glorious Name you have often heard proclaimed, but all along have slighted. Be warned, Sinners, be warned; and may the Lord help you to take the Warning! Otherwise be assured, that in a very little Time Shame and Confusion, yea the most

G

dreadful

^x Jam. ii. 5. ^y 2 Tim. vi. 18. ^z 1 Thes. i. 5. ^a Luke i. 12. ^b John iii. 19. ^c Hos. xiii. 9.

dreadful *Astonishment* will take hold of you. This, tho' it be terrible to be spoken, must unavoidably be your Case, when you shall find, that *the Harvest is past, the Summer ended^d*, and you are lost, yea, irrecoverably and eternally lost, instead of being saved.

But if, thro' Grace, any that have hitherto withstood the Gospel-Call should now be quickened and enabled heartily to close with Christ, whatever have been their past Impenitence and Unbelief, their obstinate and multiplied Refusals, they shall yet find Mercy, and be saved in the Lord; yea, saved with a Salvation that is absolutely endless and everlasting^e. Again,

[2.] Consider, after what Manner the *Earthen Vessels*, in which *this Treasure is contained*, are to be regarded. And here, let me intreat you to remember,

1. That no more is to be expected from Ministers, than what *their weak Condition* will admit of.

The raising the Expectation too high is in many Cases the frequent Occasion of a Disappointment. When the Israelites laid too great a Stress upon the Ark, saying, *It shall save us^f*; it was just in the LORD, that at that Time it should fail to be of any Service. Nor is it to be expected, that the Ordinance of Preaching should be beneficial to any, while the GOD of this Ordinance is neglected. Who is Paul, or who Apollos, but Ministers whom Christ has sent, who after all their Diligence in planting or watering, can give no Success to their own Endeavours^g? Neither under their Preaching will any believe, but as the Lord shall give Faith to every one that does so.—Think of this,

^d Jer. viii. 20. ^e Isai. xlv. 17. ^f 1 Sam. iv. 3. ^g 1 Cor.

this, *You that omit secret Prayer before, or after Hearing. Cease ye from Man^h, and look up in humble Addresses, with a faithful Regard to the Arm of the Lord, that this being revealed, the Word may become effectual.*

But then, as your *Esteem for Ministers* should not be raised too high, they being but *Earthen Vessels*; so neither should it be suffered to fall too low, since they have a *Treasure in them*; and it is by the *Foolishness of Preaching* that *GOD will save his Peopleⁱ*, who are to regard the Gospel, and its faithful Ministry, not as the Word of Men, but (as it is in Truth) the Word of GOD, which effectually worketh in them that believe^k.

Again, are *Ministers but Earthen Vessels*, then remember,

2. That *Nothing should be done to weaken their Hands, but all that can be to strengthen them in the Work of the Lord.*

Let every One that nameth the Name of Christ, let the Members of Churches especially, be strictly watchful, that they may not be their Hindrance. Let them not add to their Burthens, by any unnecessary Disputes, warm Debates, or needless Dissensions; by any Envy or Strife, Variance or Emulation among themselves. Let every One guard, as far as possible, both as to Himself, and his Christian Brethren, that there may be no disorderly Walking, no dishonourable Slips, or shameful Miscarriages in their Practice. For in whatever Degree these Things are found among Professors, they cast an inevitable and proportional Reproach upon the Gospel, and must therefore be an heavy Burthen of Grief and Sorrow upon its faithful Ministers; who know, that if, by the infinite Wisdom and Care of their Heavenly Master, these threatening

Evils be not wonderfully over-ruled, the Work of the Gospel will be sadly obstructed thereby. Watch therefore, that Nothing of this Kind may ever arise, to render feeble Hands still weaker.

Instead of this, be careful to do all within your Power, that the incessant Labours of Ministers, under their many Infirmities and Discouragements, may become tolerably easy; yea, delightfully pleasant, by being truly made successful. — To this End, be perswaded to pray earnestly for all the Ministers of Christ in general, and for those in particular, whose Ministry at any Time you shall attend, that their Mouth may be touched with a Coal from the Altar¹, and that they may come in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ^m. — Let every Person for Himself be constant also in the secret, but necessary Duty of Meditation; ruminating seriously upon the Word of Faith which Ministers preach; praying, and waiting for the Spirit; and thus endeavouring, that from Time to Time a close and profitable Application may be made to his own Soul of the spiritual and important Things, which thro' a faithful Ministry God Himself proclaims.

Let those who are Heads of Families, be careful to discourse upon, and inculcate at Home, the Truths that have been delivered in the open Congregation. When the Catechizing of Children, and the Instructing of Servants, were conscientiously and generally practised by a Number of Religious Parents and Masters, both in this great City, and almost throughout the Land, then the publick Ministry of the Word was more remarkably blest and owned, than now it is, or is likely to be, till the Lord shall graciously raise up a Generation, which shall be called, *The Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Paths to dwell in*ⁿ.

Finally,

¹ Isa. vi. 6, 7.

^m Rom. xv. 29.

ⁿ Isa. lviii. 12.

Finally, let every One that professes to be a Disciple of Christ, endeavour to encourage his faithful Ministers, by seeking and maintaining a Temper of Mind, truly Heavenly and Divine, and full of all Goodness^o. And let this be discovered by an humble, holy, self-denying, and circumspect Conversation: For every such Example of the Power of Religion, whether it be in High or Low, in Old or Young, is to them that behold it, like an Epistle of Recommendation^p, shewing that the Ministers, whose Labours are thus prospered and blest to the Conversion of the Soul and its Growth in Grace, have certainly received their Commission from GOD. And a deep Conviction of this in the Minds of Men is one likely Means of opening a great Door and effectual^q, for the Success of a Gospel-Ministry.

By these, and all such true and regular Methods, let the Ministers of Christ receive the best Countenance, the best Assistance, Support, and Encouragement, which it shall at any Time be in your Power to give them. And further,

[3.] Consider, what Returns should be made to the Great GOD, from whom this Treasure is sent, and by whose Power and Blessing alone it is made to be of Service.

And sure these Sayings in the Text can no sooner sink down into our Ears^r, or into our Hearts especially, but they must inspire us with the deepest Reverence, and the warmest Affection to the excellent Majesty of our GOD; since in this Matter, and what relates to it, His Glory has its fullest Display and highest Exaltation, vastly beyond the Manifestations of it in any of the other Operations of his Hand. Let me therefore, tho' I can now do it but in a summary Manner,

^o Rom. xv. 14.

^p 2 Cor. iii. 1, 2.

^q 1 Cor. xvi. 9.

^r Luke ix.

Manner, urge you to the *suitable Returns* which this Subject calls for. And I shall only insist upon — a *thankful Adoration*, and — an *humble and constant Dependence*.

I. There is abundant Reason for a *thankful Adoration*.

This will be the *Employment of Heaven*, the *Work of Eternity*: But if it be not *begun and entered upon here*, there can be no Reason for any to expect, that they shall be so *happy*, as to have either a *Fitness for it*, or an *Inclination to it*, in the *other World*.

I might observe here, that the *Text*, in an harmonious *Agreement* with many other *Places of Scripture*, prompts us to *bless GOD*, — for the *Foundation of the Gospel in the Covenant of Grace*, as well as — for the *Revelation of the glad Tidings of a Saviour* by it. It *calls for the humble Adoration of the Saints*, and *GOD* should establish with *Christ*, as the *Head of the Church*, an *everlasting Covenant*, ordered in all *Things and sure*, the *bottomless and inexhaustible Mine* of all the *Treasures* that the *Gospel* speaks of. And is there not *Reason* also for our *thankful Admiration*, that we should be *favoured* with a most certain *Divine Revelation* of those *Eternal Transactions*, and have the *happy and distinct Account of them* which the *Gospel* gives us? — *Without the Covenant*, there could have been no *Gospel*; and *without the Gospel*, we had been ignorant of the *Covenant*. And in either *Case*, as we had *sinned without Law*, so *without Law* (that is, *without a Revelation of Grace*;) we must have *perished*.*

But the *Text* leads us more directly, to *bless GOD*, — for his *employing sinful and imperfect Men in the Work of the Ministry*, and — for his *rendering their Message effectual*.

(1.) The

(1.) The Text leads us to *blefs GOD*, for his *employing sinful and imperfect Men* in the *Work of the Ministry*: Not only for his *sending us the Gospel itself*, but even for his *sending it by such feeble Messengers*.

He could, no doubt, have spoken to us by *pure Spirits* that *never were embodied*, and have employed his *Holy Angels*, who *excell in Wisdom and Strength*, upon this *weighty Errand*. But would *this* have been *more to our Advantage*, or *his own Glory*? Are we sure, that *their Excellency* would not have *made us afraid*? Or could *they have given* any comfortable *Success to their Message*, any more than the *weakest Ministers* can? Or might not *their shining Brightness* have so *dazzled the Eyes of Men*, that the *Glory of GOD* might not have been so *distinctly observed*, or *humbly admired*, in the *Success of the Gospel*, as now it is, when the *Word is preached by dying Mortals*? Or might not the *Angelick Language* have been too *lofty* for our *mean Understanding*? Or could our *narrow Capacities* have *taken in Divine and Spiritual Things as fast*, as they could have held them forth?

Be *fully reconciled* then to the *Dispensation of GOD* herein; yea, be *very thankful* for it: Since now, you may easily imagine, *Souls in Distress* can *open their Case*, and speak with *more Freedom and Familiarity* of their *Temptations, Doubts, and Fears*, to *Ministers* who are *their Fellow-Mortals*, and *their sinful Fellow-Creatures*, than they could to a *Rank of Beings* so much *above them*, as the *Holy Angels* are. And it is certain, that *Ministers* can *speak to the People*, after a *Manner* in which the *Angels of Heaven* never could; that is, in *such a feeling, experimental, and sympathizing Manner*, as *their perfect Condition* could not admit of. They might have *certified you of the pardoning Grace of God in Christ*, in a *Way of faithful Declaration*;

ration; but could not have borne a Testimony concerning it from their own Experience, as now your Ministers can. And is it not the Advantage which you have reaped from GOD's speaking to you by mortal Worms, and sinful Creatures, like your selves, which makes you lament the heavy Loss which at present you sustain?

It is happy indeed, when what Ministers have experienced, as to their own Guilt and Corruption, their own Temptations, Trials, and Afflictions, fits them the better for their publick Work and Ministry. And have not you often thought, that this was the Case as to your late dear Pastor? whose Preaching and Ministry, I doubt not, you have found to savour of the same Spirit, as his Letters do. And since it may please God to bless the Publication of some of his pious Breathings expressed therein, during the Time of his long Affliction; I cannot forbear extracting a few Passages out of one and another of his Letters to some of the Brethren of this Church, which I have had the Opportunity and Benefit of reading.

There are several Things in these, worthy of our Remark and Observation: Particularly, His deep Sense of the Greatness of his Guilt, of the Number of his Transgressions, and the Demerit of Sin. For as he laments his many, many Sins and Infirmities, so he acknowledges, even when he found himself, as he expressed it, "universally and extremely Ill," that yet "it might have been much worse, and Sin deserved it should be so." And again, "Indeed wearisome Days and Nights are appointed to me; Providence takes very distressing Turns with me: Yet," says he, "I know all is wise and righteous; and I hope, gracious." And in a Letter to another Friend, after a very affecting Introduction of "a Representation of the dull Scene of his poor afflicted Condition," as he justly termed it, "upon Account of the Continuance of several

" threatening

“ *threatening Symptoms and painful Disorders, with Want of Sleep, and Loss of Appetite ;*” he adds, “ *thus the blessed GOD is pleased to make Life a troublesome Affair ; and very justly, for it is a poor sinful Life.*” Yea, *such a Sight* had he of the Evil of Sin, that he declared his Apprehension and Belief, that *eternal Damnation and Destruction* was but its proper Wages. And as an Evidence of his believing Sentiments concerning the Terribleness of Divine Wrath, he took Notice, that “ *if Sin makes this Life so miserable, what dreadful Work will it make with unpardoned Sinners in the other World, when the full Punishment will be inflicted upon them.*” Hence he owned, “ *that the Time of his Affliction would have been a gloomy Season, and dreadful indeed, had he not been favoured, thro’ the rich Grace of GOD, with a satisfying Perswasion and Prospect of escaping that Eternal Damnation and Destruction, which he saw to be the Wages of Sin.*”

And what an Encouragement must it be, to find that One, who had *so clear a Conviction* of the Evil and Desert of Sin as he had, should be raised to *such a Confidence and lively Hope* of Salvation, thro’ Faith in the Mediation of Christ, as he was ? This he declared in many Passages, saying in one of his Letters, “ *Tho’ I have many, many Sins and Infirmities, I know the Righteousness of Christ is All-sufficient to justify me: By the Grace of GOD, I penitently and humbly trust to that ; and am satisfied, it cannot fail.*” And in another he says, “ *The great Foundation that GOD has laid in Zion is all my Hope : There I am satisfied ; I have a sure Dependance.*” And in a Letter to another Friend, after he had been mentioning the Miseries of the Damned, he immediately adds, “ *But I humbly trust, I am safe in the Hands of Him, who has made a compleat Atonement, and who ever lives to*

“ see the Effects of it in the compleat Salvation of
 “ all that believe in Him. Lord, increase my Faith
 “ in Jesus, the All-sufficient Saviour!” For, as he
 said, “ he could depend on the Word of the Gospel,
 “ that Faith in Christ and Eternal Life are insepara-
 “ bly connected.

Who that reads, with any spiritual Understanding
 and serious Attention, such Passages as these, but
 must observe the strong and lively Actings of a true
 and saving Faith; teaching and enabling him to re-
 nounce his own Righteousness, and to flee naked to Christ,
 the sure and only Foundation of a Sinner's Hope of
 Salvation? These, which are the first, we see will be
 likewise some of the last Actings of Faith in gracious
 Souls. And every humble Penitent quickened there-
 unto, shall find Relief as he did, and may thus be
 raised to the comfortable Prospect and Hope of a
 blissful Immortality, as once and again in his Letters
 he assured his Friends he was.

Having this comfortable Persuasion that all was
 safe as to his Eternal State, his great Concern farther
 was, that he might behave under his Afflictions with Pati-
 ence and Submission, aiming at a spiritual Improvement
 of his Trials: Saying, in one of his Letters, “ I
 “ know not, what GOD is doing with me: His
 “ Will be done!” In another, after a Complaint that
 he could not swallow but with great Pain and
 Difficulty, “ The Will of my Father in Heaven be
 done!” And in another, “ I shall be glad of my
 “ Friends Prayers, that I may be ready for the Divine
 “ Will: I am not to say to my GOD, what dost thou?
 “ I desire to be waiting with Patience and Submission
 “ the Pleasure of my great LORD and Master, in
 “ the Issue of this present Visitation: The LORD turn
 “ all Things to some spiritual Good!”

And the Spirit of GOD, who is the Comforter,
 as well as Sanctifier, both of Ministers and People,
 having raised his Believing Soul to an holy Confidence and

comfortable Assurance, as he could not, it seems, but humbly testify it before the Church at a late Administration of the solemn Ordinance of the Lord's-Supper; so in one of his Letters, " he blesses GOD, he could " look beyond the Gloom and Anguish of the present " Scene to a State and World, where all these Things " shall for ever cease, where there shall be no Sin nor " Mortality, and therefore all Happiness." He was thus satisfied with an abiding Peace, and filled, if not with a rapturous, yet a solid Joy in Believing; till the LORD was pleased to take him hence, and give him the happy Experience, what a delightful Change it is to have Faith turned into Vision, Hope into Fruition, and the weak Actings of a defective Love at once raised into a perfect Flame, to be kept ever burning and shining in the Celestial Sphere above, to the endless Felicity of the Saints, and the eternal Praise of their Redeemer.

And may all that sate under his judicious Ministry,* thro' the Divine Blessing upon the Seed which he has sown, be favoured according to the Measure of the Gift of Christ, with the like saving Illumination, with the like relieving and comfortable Views by Faith of our exalted Head and Lord, whose perfect and everlasting Righteousness is the only Foundation of the awakened Sinner's Hope of finding Mercy with an infinitely just and holy God! Yea, may it appear to be the Will of the Lord, that Multitudes in these Times of Degeneracy and Lukewarmness shall be quickened to the like Desires to honour GOD now, and to the like Assurance and Hope of a full Enjoyment of Him hereafter, as dwelt in the happy Soul of your deceased Pastor!

H 2

And

* Mr. Wright has left a Testimony of his Judgment and Faith concerning several of the important Truths of Divine Revelation in a Sermon, which he published about three Years ago, intitled, *Scripture-Knowledge and Practice necessary to Salvation.*

Eph. iv. 7.

And certainly such will have no Reason to regret, that the Treasure of the Gospel is put into Earthen Vessels; but will see themselves the more obliged,

(2.) To bless GOD, for rendering the Message he sends by such weak Instruments effectual.

There are none of the blessed Effects, which are produced under a Gospel-Ministry, but what do in a very illustrious Manner spread abroad the Glory of the mighty Power of GOD. For it was not what the Apostles or Ministers of Christ wrought, but what GOD wrought by them, that heretofore made the Gentiles obedient^w, and has now made any of you so among the rest. Have the spiritual Weapons of Ministers been successful to the pulling down of strong Holds? It is because they were mighty thro' GOD^x. Have any been filled with all Joy and Peace in believing? Still it must be acknowledged, that they abound in Hope, only thro' the Power of the Holy Ghost^y.

And to Eternity it will be seen, that this Power was exercised in a Way of Righteousness? For Respect being had to the Mediation and Redemption of Christ, it is now a righteous Thing with GOD, to forgive us the Sins which we confess^z, and to create the Fruit of the Lips, saying, Peace, Peace^a to the wounded Conscience, sensible of its Defilement, and humbled for its Guilt. And for the Sake of the Redeemer also, it is now a righteous Thing, that the Almighty Power of GOD himself should be engaged in casting out Satan, in subduing the proud Lusts of the Hearts of Believers, and in acting as the most friendly and constant Ally of all the Redeemed of the Lord.

And can there be, in any of GOD's Dealings with us, a more glorious Instance, either of his Goodness and Mercy, or of his Wisdom, Holiness, and Sovereignty, than there is in his delivering us from the

Power

^w Rom. xv. 18.
^z 1 John i. 9.

^x 2 Cor. x. 4.
^a Isai. lvii. 19.

^y Rom. xv. 13.

Power of Darkneſs, and translating us into the Kingdom of his dear Son^b; or than in his beginning, and carrying on, the Work of Faith with Power^c? Do not the Scriptures assure us, that his thus begetting any again unto a lively Hope, by the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the Dead, is an Evidence of the Abundance of his Mercy^d, and of the ſovereign good Pleaſure of his Goodneſs, as well as of the exceeding Greatneſs of his Power towards them that believe^e? And as He who works in us theſe great Things, muſt be Mighty, ſo Holy is his Name^f.

We are then not only to admire the irreſiſtible Greatneſs of the Power of GOD, but the ſhining Excellency of that Power, which in the Succeſs of the Goſpel is exerciſed and exerted in a moſt glorious Way of Righteouſneſs and Love, with an infinite Underſtanding, and an uncontrollable Sovereignty that ought ever to be adored.

But this cannot be rightly done, unleſs we endeavour likewise to act,

2. An humble and conſtant Dependance upon Him.

Let me earneſtly preſs you to this, as a farther Improvement of what has been delivered; and this Exhortation, I think, will be a fit Concluſion of the preſent Diſcourſe.

Now therefore let me ask, Can there be any ſtronger, or more engaging Inducements to Confidence and Truſt, than the Excellency of the Power of GOD affords You? Or can the Excellency of his Power be rendered more conſpicuous to the Eye of a Believer, than by the wonderful Diſplays of it in the admirable Effects of a Goſpel-Miniſtry? Can they, that have inwardly felt the Power of GOD in their own Converſion, think any Thing to be too hard for Him to effect? Is not

^b Col. i. 13. ^c 2 Theſ. i. 11. ^d 1 Pet. i. 3. ^e 2 Theſ. i. 11. ^f Luke i. 49.

the Goodness, with which this Power is exercised, sufficient thro' the Mediation of Christ to encourage the most steady and lasting Confidence, even after the deepest Sight a Man can have of his own Unworthiness and Ill Deservings? Is not this Power insuperable by all the Force of Hell, and by the most raging Lusts of the base Hearts of the vilest of Men? Can all the Policy of Satan, all the Craftiness of the Wicked, or the Deceitfulness of Sin, ever out-do, or be a Match for the infinite Wisdom with which the Excellency of this Power is attended? Trust ye then in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting Strength^h. Trust in Him to perfect that which concerns youⁱ, to fulfil in You all the good Pleasure of his Goodness, and the Work of Faith with Power^k. Trust in Him, even when his Way is in the Sea, and his Path in the great Waters, so that his Footsteps cannot be known.^l Trust in Him under every threatening Event, and under the Darkness of the present Dispensation.

After what you have heard from the Text of the Design of such a Step of Providence, be afraid of putting any Construction upon it, or of drawing any Conclusions from it, that would weaken your Faith, your Hope, or Confidence in God. Believe the Word of the Lord, and so shall you be established^m.

Do the past Misimprovements, Neglects, or Provocations of any of you, whose Hearts are now trembling under the Rebuke of the Lord, make you fear, that the pious, learned, and judicious Minister whom you have lost, was taken away in God's holy Wrath? Bewail your Iniquities in humble Confession before God, looking by Faith to the Blood of Jesus Christ his Son, and you shall find, that for his Sake the Power of the Lord, as well as his Mercy, shall be great,

^h Isa. xxvi. 4.ⁱ Psal. cxxxviii. 8.^k 2 Thef. i. 11.^l Psal. lxxvii. 19.^m 2 Chron. xx. 20.

great, in forgiving your Transgressions, and in pardoning all your Sins.

Have you found in Times past the Benefit and Advantage of an able, faithful Ministry, and are you deeply convinced of your farther Need of it? Trust then in the Excellency of the Power of GOD, to raise up, and send you again a Pastor after his own Heartⁿ. His Power is still as able as ever, to furnish his Ministers with all the Wisdom and Holiness which they can need, with all the spiritual Light, Gifts, and Graces, and with all the Degrees and Measures thereof, that may capacitate them for their most difficult Work, and for the greatest Usefulness and Service therein.

Are you convinced, as you ought to be, that tho' the most able Minister, or an Angel from Heaven, should be sent to preach the Gospel, yet that it is the Lord alone, who can make it effectual to your spiritual Benefit? Let this by no Means discourage your Attendance upon GOD's Appointments; but quicken you to keep his Way, and thus to wait for his Blessing.

Having experienced some real Profit, under the Ministry of the Word yourselves; would you be glad, that its Usefulness might be extended to others also, to your Children and Servants, with Multitudes of the rising Generation? Consider, that the Excellency of the Power of GOD can make the glad Tidings of the Gospel beneficial and salutary to them, and to as many of them as he pleases.

And would you willingly be enabled, to remember those who have had the Rule over You, who have been your Guides, and spoken unto you the Word of GOD^o? Would you follow their Faith, and imitate their Patience, making the Exaltation of the Name of Christ the Aim and End of your Conversation, as it was of theirs? Trust then in the Excellency of the Power

Power of that GOD and Saviour, who is the same Yesterday, To-day, and for ever^p, in whom they also trusted.

To his Care, in the humble Exercise of Prayer, and the lively Actings of Faith, be daily committing the Keeping of your own Souls^q; the Keeping of the Sorrowful Relict, and Fatherless Children of your Deceased Pastor; the Keeping also of this, and every other bereaved Church and Congregation, with the Management of every Interest, Matter, or Cause, wherein the Honour of GOD, the Glory of Christ, and the Salvation of Souls have any Concern.

FINALLY, my Brethren, stand fast in the Lord^r; trusting in Him, who has been Gracious in promising, and will be Faithful in performing; that your Hearts may be comforted, and your Souls established in every good Word and Work^s; that you, and every Member of the Church, may be kept from all Evil^t; that no Man may take your Crown^u; but that you may be kept thro' Faith unto Salvation^w, to be the Joy and Crown^x of those who have laboured among You in the Word and Doctrine^y, to the Praise of the Glory and Excellency, both of the Grace and Power of GOD, World without End. AMEN. And let all the People seriously and humbly, yea, let the LORD Himself graciously say, AMEN.

^p Heb. xiii. 8. ^q 1 Pet. iv. 19. ^r Phil. iv. 1. ^s 2 Thes. ii. 17. ^t 2 Thes. iii. 3. ^u Rev. iii. 11. ^w 1 Pet. i. 5. ^x 1 Thes. ii. 19. ^y 1 Tim. v. 17.



F I N I S.

e
o
.
f
r
y
e
.
.
.
i
r
d
y
i
u
be
ag
be
er
et
de
.
ii.
ef.
o